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## Wisconsin Manufacturers Face Challenges But Local Outreach Center Can Help



A one of a kind survey shows Wisconsin manufacturers will face many challenges in order to stay competitive in the coming years.

The survey released Wednesday by the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership says that many of the state's manufacturers are thriving in the global economy but at the same time many are falling behind.

UW-Stout is offering a unique approach to keeping western Wisconsin manufacturers ahead of the game.

The Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center (NWMOC) works directly with area manufacturers to make sure they stay profitable and competitive in the 21st Century economy.

In business, in order to stay profitable you've got to be competitive. But in recent years many of the state's manufacturers have lost their edge.

"A lot of the times it's just economic conditions they're not prepared for. A lot of the cases, an entrepreneur has grown their business from scratch and just doesn't know how to change it," says Larry Blackledge, NWMOC's executive director.

But Blackledge says that's where the NWMOC comes in. He says they offer area manufacturers a fresh pair of eyes so their companies can become as lean and efficient as possible. They do this by identifying waste, where it occurs and help find ways to eliminate it. The company also finds ways to come up with inventory re-education which is cost saving.

"We work in all different kinds of areas from strategic planning and strategic services to cost reduction through process improvement, and top line growth through new marketing message from new products and new markets," says Blackledge.

NWMOC does all this with small to mid-size manufacturers in 33 northern and western Wisconsin counties. Larry says their bottom line is making sure their client's bottom line sees growth.

"Through them in the last year, we produced impacts of about \$60 million. That's what our clients are reporting. So our payback on our services is pretty high," adds Blackledge.

And to give you an idea of how many western Wisconsin manufacturers the NWMOC impacts, last year alone they worked with 139 different clients.

And all of those companies are right here in northern and western Wisconsin.